NEEDHAM & LADDUS INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

At a Meeting of the Needham & Laddus IDB
Held at The Crown Lodge, Outwell, Tuesday 14th April 2026 at 7PM.

PRESENT

James Martin (Chair)	Chris Robinson
Jonathan Fenn (V-Chair)	Colin Rose
Dale Boyce	John Scott
Steven Calton	Michael Scott
Peter Lankfer	Ben Wales
Josh Martin	Paul West

Mr Paul Burrows, the Clerk, was also in attendance along with Mr Morgan Lakey representing the Consulting Engineer. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Joshua Martin and Ben Wales both attending the Board for the first time.

Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Christopher Crofts, Michael Fenn, Keith Harrison and Nigel Harrison

B.438 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded Members of the importance of declaring an interest in any matter included in today's agenda that involved or was likely to affect any individual on the Board.

Mr Jon Fenn declared interests as an employee of the Middle Level Commissioners in any matter related to the Commissioners.

Members agreed to declare any interests during the course of the meeting.

B.439 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes were confirmed as a true record, and no Matters Arising were identified.

RESOLVED

> That the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 15th April 2025 are recorded correctly and that they be confirmed and signed.

B.440 Constitution & Membership

The Chairman confirmed that Mr Michael Fenn has now resigned as District Officer and Board Member, and it is proposed to replace him with Mr Ben Wales who also provides District Officer functions for two other IDBs. He read out a letter from Mr M Fenn and the Board thanked Mr Fenn for his years of dedicated and loyal service.

The Chairman added that Mr N Harrison has also agreed to join the Board as a co-opted member and therefore fills the remaining vacancy.

Mr Burrows highlight a recent approach from Waldersey Farms Ltd who now wish to reenergise their membership of local IDBs, and they have earmarked Ms Rebecca Young to face Needham & Laddus IDB. It was recommended that she be invited to meetings and contribute as a non-voting member, until a vacancy arises or the next election.

Mr Burrows highlighted the valued and successful of tenure of the existing Chairman and Vice Chairman, however given the length of that tenure suggested that in-line with Cabinet Office Public Appointment principles, that it was important that the Board consider succession arrangements. Mr J Fenn announced his decision to step down as Vice Chair and H&S Rep at the April 2027 meeting or sooner should the Chairman wish, however he would be happy to continue to support the induction of Mr B Wales. The Chairman and Board Members were supportive of Mr Fenn continuing to aid a smooth transition.

Mr Burrows referred to the training and professional development expectations now sought by Defra within the Board's annual report. He suggested that Board Members consider attending the Biodiversity Day being planned by Sofi Lloyd.

Health & Safety as a training need was mentioned and it given that Mr B Wales clarified that he had no formal training, it was agreed as appropriate in principle that the Board offer to contribute, along with his other IDBs, towards suitable training.

RESOLVED

That Mr B Wales be appointed as District Officer and co-opted to the Board.
That Mr N Harrison be co-opted to the Board.
That Ms R Young be invited to attend and contribute to the Board as a non-voting member.

B.441 Clerk's Report

Mr Burrows provided an overview of his report highlighting in particular the Policy Review, Waste Exemptions and IDB1 items.

Mr J Martin and Mr P Lankfer queried the purpose and nature of Waste Exemptions with Mr M Lakey and Mr J Fenn clarifying the specific requirements relevant for this Board. They clarified that silt testing across the Middle Level was important to have confidence that waste is not considered hazardous.

Mr Burrows also highted the research underway by consultants working for Defra/MHCLG and that it was likely that some form of recommendation may be made regarding the sustainability of smaller IDBs across the country. He added that this is why our design work locally is particularly important such that any subsequent action retains local leadership.

RESOLVED

That the Clerk's Report is noted.

That the Board delegates the approval and publication of new and/or updated policies to the Clerk.

That the District Officer will keep records to enable completion of length of drain maintenance questions within the IDB1 Annual Report to Defra.

B.442 Environment Officer's Report

Mr Burrows highlighted a change in approach to the Environment Officer's reporting. There will now be newsletters developed and circulated to Members of all MLC administered IDBs with interesting and generic updates. An annual report for each IDB will now be specific to that Board and focussed on their Key Environmental Compliance Indicators as seen in the paper for this Board Meeting.

Unfortunately, the environmental review was not able to be arranged ahead of this meeting, and it is planned for 23rd April 2026. This session is used to develop the draft Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) for Board review and approval.

Mr P Burrows asked whether the Board would be comfortable in BAP approval being delegated and handled outside of a formal meeting. The Board were comfortable, and the Chairman confirmed he would value Mr B Wales review of the BAP along with himself as a minimum but would welcome any members review and inputs when it is circulated.

RESOLVED

That the Environment Officer's Report is noted.

A £100 budget is agreed for Biodiversity.

The Biodiversity Action Plan review and approval is delegated to the Chairman with Mr B Wales.

B.443 Consulting Engineers' Reports

In pursuance of Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Board resolved to exclude the public from an item that is considered confidential in nature.

The Board considered the Consulting Engineers' report, and it was taken as read.

Mr M Lakey provided an overview of the culvert replacements works undertaken by MLC on behalf of the Board, funded by Tranche 2b of the government's one-off IDB Fund grant. He outlined how the 74m culvert installation had minimal disruption within the village and future proofs point 50 within the Board's district. Mr J Fenn added that this valuable work, alongside previous grant funded culvert works, had meant the Board had not had to take a loan to fund circa £600k and budget for associated interest over the next 30-50 years. The Chairman thanked Mr Lakey and MLC for their valued work on behalf of the Board adding that this sets the Board up well in terms of financial sustainability.

Mr M Lakey then summarised his operations report, adding that the Board's "little and often" approach was having positive effect in terms of drainage and ecologically. He'll plan this year to involve Mr B Wales in the inspections and added that Mr N Harrison is available again for contracted works. He explained the measures he now needs to take in terms of works and badger setts and highlighted that if Members see works taking place from the opposite side of banks to normal, or start stops happening, it is dues to working within badger licensing requirements.

B.444 Health & Safety

Mr Burrows gave an overview of his report and the recommendations that the Board consider show it could strengthen its approach to health & safety. Mr J Fenn outlined that he had been the health & safety representative and would continue until the 2027 meeting when he steps down from the Board. The Board would like Mr B Wales to take on this role.

He reflected on the recent visit by AW Safety Management Ltd where the specialist was surprised by the limited assets and operations of the Board. He added that the report from the inspection had been recently received as is available for Board members to review.

Mr J Fenn highlighted that the main risks the Board has are related to their control structures, with two of these being the focus within the recent H&S inspection. He recommended that the Board review the boards associated with the overspill during the course of the year with a view to budgeting for their replacement, next year.

He added that there is also an old slacker at point 3 that could do with being removed. It is on a public footpath and was last used in 1998. Mr M Lakey confirmed that removal could be undertaken as part of planned maintenance works and within the budget proposed.

B.445 District Officer's Report

Mr J Fenn provided a verbal overview on behalf of Mr M Fenn summarising how the Board was in a healthy place with the culvert works future proofing the district to help cater for increased development.

B.446 Governance

Mr Burrows asked the Board to consider the Governance report and that its content be noted.

RESOLVED

Completion of the Annual Return of the Board – 2024/2025

i) The Board considered and approved the comments of the Auditors on the Annual Return for the year that ended on the 31st March 2025.

ii) The Board considered and approved the Audit Report of the Internal Auditor for the year that ended on the 31st March 2025

The Board noted the continued appointment of Whitings as Internal Auditor.

Risk Management Strategy and Internal Controls

The Board did not highlight any specific risks or issues not covered within the Board's Risk Management Strategy (published in 2024 and on the website), noted the system of financial Internal Controls (as published on website) and no additional controls were highlighted as required.

Exercise of Public Rights

Mr Burrows referred to the publishing of the Notice of Public Rights and publication of unaudited Annual Return, Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the Notice of Conclusion of the Audit and right to inspect the Annual Return.

Consideration of potential litigation, liabilities, commitments.

Mr Burrows reported that as part of the Annual Governance review the Board were required to consider if there were any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end that have a financial impact on the authority. She confirmed that there were no such matters that have been raised through the office of the clerk. Members gave consideration to the position.

RESOLVED

> That there are no such events that would have an adverse financial impact on the Board that would need to be included within the accounting statements for the financial year ended 31st March 2025.
>
> Continue with a limited assurance review approach.

IDB1 and Annual Governance Statement

The Board noted the IDB1 return for 2024/25 submitted on their behalf.

The Board approved that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Annual Governance Statement on behalf of the Board for the financial year ended 31st March 2026.

B.447 Finance Report – Looking Back

Finance officer's review and key messages

The Board noted the position as laid out by their Responsible Finance Officer. The Board were grateful for the work of MLC staff in securing, delivering and accounting for the £160k of IDB Fund grant for the culvert works. They considered the accounts and annual return for 2025/26. Mr P Lankfer proposed that the accounts be approved and this was seconded by Mr S Carlton.

Payments for 2025

The Payments were reviewed and accepted.

RESOLVED

> The accounts for 2025/26 and accounting statements are approved and the Chairman is authorised to sign the Annual Return.

B.448 Finance Report – Looking Forward

The Board noted the position as laid out by their Responsible Finance Officer.

Fees & Remuneration

RESOLVED

> That the District Officer's fee be increased by 5.25% from £2,100 to £2,210

Precept

Internal Drainage Boards are required to pay a Precept (IDB Precept) to the Environment Agency for their expenses managing water passing into main rivers. Predominantly, the Precept funds additional maintenance downstream of and/or benefitting IDB districts.

The Anglian (Great Ouse) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (RFCC) determined that the Precept will increase by 2% for 2026.

The precept for 2025 was £7,133.14.

RESOLVED

That the Precept is paid in full.

Estimates & Rate Requirements for 2026/27.

Budget

The Board reviewed the proposed budget as recommended by their Responsible Finance Officer.

Rate Requirement for 2026/27

Mr Burrows highlighted that the rate would need to be set at 10p and this was a 0.5p increase from 2025/26. The Chairman suggested this be accepted. A rate of 10p was proposed by Mr C Robinson and seconded by Mr J Scott.

RESOLVED

i) That the estimates be approved.

ii) That a total sum of £60,579 be raised by drainage rates and special levy.

iii) That the amounts comprised in the sum referred to in ii) above to be raised by drainage rates and to be met by special levy are £25,120 and £30,391.

iv) That a rate of 10.00p in the £ be laid and assessed on Agricultural hereditaments in the District.

v) That Special Levies of £30,391 be made and issued to The Borough Council for Kings Lynn & West Norfolk and £4,907 to Fenland District Council for the purpose of meeting such expenditure. In addition, there is a contribution from Hundred of Wisbech IDB of £162.

vi) That the seal of the Board be affixed to the record of drainage rates and special levies referred to in resolution v).

vii) That the Clerk be authorised to recover all unpaid rates and levy by such statutory powers as may be available.

B.449 Date of next Meeting

RESOLVED

The next full meeting of the Board is on 13th April 2027 in The Crown Lodge, Outwell, 7:00pm start.

B. 450 Any Other Business

None raised

The meeting closed at 8:30pm.

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Chair

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Date